

In the Claims:

Please amend claims 1 - 6, 8, 9 and 11 - 19 as follows:

- 1        1. (Amended) A method for feeding image plates (1) used in intraoral dental X-ray photography into a reading device for the images taken on the plates to be read, wherein the plates (1) are each in a casing which is used during exposure of the plate to X-rays, wherein there is a housing (2) having a door (14) dimensioned for receipt of plates and wherein there is a conveyor (9) adjacent the housing, characterized in that the method comprises the steps of:
  - 7        - removing the plates (1) from their casings used during the photographing step,
  - 8        - inserting the plates in the housing (2) provided with the door (14) and substantially protected from light, said housing forming an intermediate storage for the plates,
  - 9        - stacking the plates to form a pack in said housing, the plates being subjected to a force pulling or pressing them towards the conveyor (9) extending to the adjacency of the housing, and
  - 10      - feeding the plates from said housing by means of the conveyor (9), the conveyor
  - 11      each time gripping the nearest plate in the pack so as to forward the plates in
  - 12      sequence along the feeding path.

1           2. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the housing has a bottom  
2           (13), characterised in that the bottom (13) of the housing (2) is inclined towards the conveyor  
3           (9) so that the plates (1) in the pack are drawn towards the conveyor by force of gravity.

1           3. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 2, characterised in that the pack of  
2           plates is pushed towards the conveyor (9) by means of a pushing device, such as a rolling  
3           roll (15) located behind the pack.

1           4. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 3, characterised in that the image  
2           plate (1) includes a magnetic metal part which is attracted towards the conveyor (9) by means  
3           of a magnet (12).

1           5. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 4, characterised in that the conveyor  
2           (9) transfers image plates (1) from the housing (2) onto the path of a slide (3) integrated in  
3           the reading device, and that the slide grips the plate entering its path each time and brings  
4           the plates one by one to the reading step.

1           6. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 5, characterised in that the conveyor  
2           (9) comprises a belt or a chain positioned laterally of the housing (2).

1           8. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 7, characterised in that the belt or  
2   the chain acting as a conveyor (9) moves stepwise.

1           9. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 8, characterised in that the slide (3)  
2   of the reading device makes a reciprocating movement, returning a plate (1) whose image has  
3   been read onto the conveyor (9), which subsequently removes the plate from the process.

1           11. (Amended) An apparatus for feeding image plates (1) used in intraoral dental  
2   X-ray photography into a reading device for the images taken on the plates to be read,  
3   characterised in that the apparatus comprises a housing (2) which is provided with a door  
4   (14) and substantially protected from light, the housing forming an intermediate storage for  
5   image plates received and stacked therein, that a conveyor (9) extends to the adjacency of the  
6   housing while the plates stacked in the housing are subjected to a force pulling or pressing  
7   them towards the conveyor, and that the conveyor is provided with gripping means (16) to  
8   engage with the plates one by one, in order to forward the plates in sequence along the  
9   feeding path.

1           12. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 11, characterised in that the  
2   housing (2) has a bottom (13) which is inclined towards the conveyor (9) so that the plates  
3   (1) arranged as a pack are drawn towards the conveyor by force of gravity.

1           13. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 12, characterised in that a freely  
2       rolling roll (15) is disposed in the housing (2) in order to push the pack of plates towards the  
3       conveyor (9).

1           14. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 13, characterised in that it  
2       further comprises a magnet (12) so as to attract image plates (1) equipped with a magnetic  
3       metal part towards the conveyor (9).

1           15. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 14, characterised in that the  
2       conveyor (9) comprises an endless belt or chain which is conducted laterally of the housing  
3       (2) and moves image plates (1) in sequence onto the path of the slide (3) integrated in the  
4       reading device, and in that the slide is disposed to grip the plate entering its path each time,  
5       so as to bring the plates one by one to the image reading step.

1           16. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 15, characterised in that the  
2       conveyor comprises two parallel belts (9), between which at least one magnet (12) is placed  
3       to attract the image plates (1) towards the belts.

1           17. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 16, characterised in that the  
2       conveyor comprises a belt (9) which moves from the top to the bottom, and that the magnet

3 (12) is placed at a location lower than the bottom (13) of the housing (2) so as to keep the  
4 image plates (1) in contact with the belt during the transfer of the plates.

1 18. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 17, characterised in that the  
2 conveyor is a vertically moving toothed belt (9) with a tooth interval equalling the width of  
3 an image plate (1) so as to allow the plate to fit in-between the teeth.

1 19. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 18, characterised in that it  
2 comprises a plate-like cover (11) covering the conveyor (9), so as to allow the image plates  
3 (1) to pass between the conveyor and the cover within an interstice dimensioned to equal the  
4 thickness of the plates.

Please add the following new claim.

1 20. (New) An apparatus as defined in claim 11, characterised in that it further  
2 comprises a magnet (12) so as to attract image plates (1) equipped with a magnetic metal part  
3 towards the conveyor (9).

In the Abstract:

Please replace paragraph beginning at line 1 of page 10, with the following rewritten  
paragraph: